

Message Text

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S E C R E T AMMAN 7670

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E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PGOV, PFOR, JO, SY, PLO, XF

SUBJECT: TALK WITH BIN SHAKER - KHADDAM VISIT

REF: AMMAN 7619

SUMMARY: ARMY CINC BIN SHAKER TELLS ME THAT SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM WAS IN A POSITIVE FRAME OF MIND WHEN HE SAW KING YESTERDAY AND THAT BIN SHAKER BELIEVES THAT THIS MEANS SYRIANS ARE GIVING OUR WORKING PAPER PROPOSALS FULL CONSIDERATION. HE ALSO BELIEVES KING HAD A GOOD CHANCE TO PROVIDE SYRIANS WITH POSITIVE VIEWS AND IS HOPEFUL KING'S IDEAS WILL BE FACTORED HEAVILY INTO COMING INTERNAL SYRIAN DEBATE ON OUR PROPOSALS. SYRIANS SAY THEY ARE CONFUSED OVER PLO'S REAL ATTITUDE. SAUDI PRINCE ABDULLAH IS ADVOCATING A MEETING OF THE CONFRONTATIONS STATES AND THE PLO, POSSIBLY WITH SAUDI ATTENDANCE, TO REACH A COMMON VIEW ON U.S. PROPOSAL FOR RECONVENING GENEVA. END SUMMARY.

1. IN COURSE OF OCT 18 MEETING WITH JAF CINC BIN SHAKER ON ANOTHER SUBJECT, CONVERSATION TURNED TO ABDUL HALIM KHADDAM'S OCT 17 VISIT TO JORDAN. BIN SHAKER SAID HE SAT IN ON MEETING BETWEEN

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KHADDAM AND KING HUSSEIN.

2. GENERAL REACTION THAT BIN SHAKER HAD WAS THAT FROM TENOR OF KHADDAM'S QUESTIONS THERE WAS A POSITIVE CAST OR TONE TO THE SYRIAN ATTITUDE. KHADDAM, ACCORDING TO BIN SHAKER, WAS ATTEMPTING TO SEEK OUT KING'S VIEWS AND ASSESSMENTS BEFORE

PLUNGING INTO A GENERAL CONSIDERATION IN DAMASCUS OF U.S. WORKING PAPER AND ALLIED ISSUES. BIN SHAKER SAID THIS TOO WAS A POSITIVE STEP AND THAT HE THOUGHT HUSSEIN'S SUPPORTIVE POSITION PASSED ON TO KHADDAM WOULD HELP WITH THE SYRIANS.

3. ON THE PLO, KHADDAM PROFESSED TO BE CONFUSED BY THE WELTER OF STATEMENTS AND VIEWS PASSED TO SYRIA BY THE PLO. IN EFFECT, KHADDAM SAID THAT THE PLO DOES NOT KNOW WHAT IT WANTS. SHAKER ALSO SAID THAT SOVIET VIEWS AND ATTITUDES HAD NOT COME UP IN THE DISCUSSION HERE YESTERDAY WITH THE SYRIANS. HE SAID THAT KING PUSHED HARD ON THE POINT THAT IT MAKES LITTLE DIFFERENCE WHICH ORGANIZATIONAL GROUP REPRESENTS THE PALESTINIANS AT GENEVA, THE IMPORTANT THING IS THAT PALESTINIANS WILL BE THERE AND THAT THE ARABS SHOULD NOW FOCUS THEIR ATTENTION ON WHICH INDIVIDUALS WOULD BE BEST SUITED TO REPRESENT THE PALESTINIANS. SHAKER THOUGHT THE SYRIANS WERE POSITIVE ALSO TOWARD THIS LINE OF THE KING'S.

4. I ASKED ABOUT SYRIAN ATTITUDES TOWARD THE U.S. HE SAID THAT SYRIANS TALKED ABOUT CONTINUING FAITH IN PRESIDENT, IN HIS POSITION, AND HOPED THAT HE COULD PERSEVERE. HERE THEY HAD DOUBTS THAT THE PRESIDENT COULD OVERCOME THE POTENTIAL U.S. DOMESTIC SECRET

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OPPOSITION ARTICULATED BY THE ISRAELIS ON KEY POINTS. BIN SHAKER SAID JORDAN TOO SHARED THESE DOUBTS.

5. HE ADDED THAT SYRIANS TENDED TO SEE THE U.S. AS FOLLOWING A "ZIG-ZAG POLICY" IN THE AREA WITH THE LATEST "ZIG" THE JOINT U.S.-SOVIET COMMUNIQUE AND THE LATEST "ZAG" THE U.S.-ISRAEL STATEMENT AFTER THE OCTOBER 4 DAYAN MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT. I GAVE BIN SHAKER MY JUDGMENT AND REASONING ON WHY WE BELIEVED WE WERE PURSUING A BALANCED APPROACH AND HE SAID HE BELIEVED THAT FOR THE FIRST TIME THE U.S. WAS BEING TRULY EVEN-HANDED IN THE MIDDLE EAST. SYRIANS ARE STILL CLEARLY WORRIED ABOUT EGYPTIANS GETTING OUT AHEAD WITH THE ISRAELIS AND I DID WHAT I COULD TO TRY TO ALLAY SHAKER'S CONCERN ON THIS SCORE, POINTING OUT THE PROBLEM SINAI II HAD CAUSED AND NOTING THAT THE EGYPTIANS SEEMED UNWILLING TO REPEAT THAT EPISODE.

6. ON THE SAUDI PRINCE ABDULLAH VISIT, SHAKER SAID THAT ABDULLAH HAS BEEN PUSHING FOR SOME TYPE OF MEETING FOR THE COORDINATION OF VIEWS BETWEEN THE

CONFRONTATION STATES, WITH THE PLO AND PERHAPS THE SAUDIS PRESENT.

7. KHADDAM DID NOT SHOW ANY CONCERN ABOUT DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS IN SYRIA AND SEEMED CONFIDENT. SHAKER BELIEVES THINGS ARE SHAKY AND THAT ASAD IS HEAVILY DEPENDENT ON HIS BROTHER RIFAAT FOR SECURITY SUPPORT AND WOULD NOT BREAK WITH HIM. THE ANTI-CORRUPTION DRIVE IS ALIENATING A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT GROUPS-- HE NOTED IN PARTICULAR THE SUNNI--AND THIS COULD HURT ASAD BADLY IF HE IS NOT CAREFUL. SYRIANS SAID THEY EXPECTED MORE PRESSURE FROM IRAQ OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS--I ASSUME THIS MEANS SYRIANS EXPECT IRAQIS TO TRY TO INFLUENCE SYRIAN REACTION TO OUR PROPOSALS
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WHILE THEY ARE CONSIDERING IT. SHAKER ALSO SAID THAT SYRIANS DID NOT RAISE WITH JORDANIANS POINTS ABOUT DESIRABILITY OF AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE IN THE WEST BANK--NOTING "THEY WOULD NEVER DO THAT WITH US; THEY KNOW HOW WE FEEL AND THEY ARE VERY CAREFUL IN DISCUSSING SUCH THINGS."

8. COMMENT: SHAKER'S UPBEAT AND POSITIVE REPORT IS ENCOURAGING. WHILE HE WAS SHORT ON DETAILS, I DO NOT BELIEVE SHAKER WOULD DELIBERATELY MISLEAD US. HE SAID THAT WHILE HE LIKES KHADDAM--KHADDAM IS FIERCELY LOYAL TO ASAD AND THE REGIME--HE WOULD NOT WANT TO BUY A USED CAR FROM HIM.

9. RECOMMEND DEPARTMENT PASS CAIRO, DAMASCUS, AND JIDDA.
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